

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 088116

NODIS
FOR THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: MARR, KS, US

SUBJECT: TROOP WITHDRAWAL - LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT

1. FOR YOUR INFORMATION, THE FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF A LETTER
SENATOR GLENN INFORMS US HE SENT THE PRESIDENT APRIL 4.
2. BEGIN TEXT: DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: I AM WRITING TO
EXPRESS MY RESERVATIONS ABOUT PROCEEDING WITH THE PROPOSED
WITHDRAWAL OF THE FIRST 6,000 TROOPS FROM THE REPUBLIC OF
KOREA IN LATE 1978.

IN THE CURRENT KOREAN SCANDAL INVESTIGATION CLIMATE, IT IS
HIGHLY DOUBTFUL THAT CONGRESS WILL APPROVE THE FULL
TRANSFER LEGISLATION THIS YEAR. EVEN THE CONSIDERATION OF
A LESS THAN TOTAL PACKAGE THIS YEAR AS AN INDICATION OF
GOOD FAITH COULD HAVE THE REVERSE EFFECT IN EAST ASIA OF
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INDUCING EVEN GREATER SKEPTICISM WITH REGARD TO OUR
RELIABILITY FOR A LONG-TERM U.S. COMMITMENT.

3. AS YOU ARE WELL AWARE, THE MILITARY AND POLITICAL
BALANCE ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA AND IN NORTHEAST ASIA IS
FRAGILE. DOUBTS PERSIST REGARDING U.S. INTENTIONS, NOT
ONLY IN KOREA, BUT AMONG OTHER EAST ASIA ALLIES IN GENERAL,

AND A PRECIPITOUS REDUCTION OF GROUND COMBAT PERSONNEL IN

THE ABSENCE OF A CONGRESSIONALLY-APPROVED TRANSFER PACKAGE
WILL ONLY EXACERBATE THESE UNCERTAINTIES, PARTICULARLY
WITH REGARD TO JAPAN.

4. IN OTHER WORDS, I BELIEVE IT IS CRITICAL THAT WE NOT
TIE OUR KOREAN REDUCTIONS TO A NO-MATTER-WHAT, RIGID
TIMETABLE, BUT RATHER TIE WITHDRAWAL TO THE ACTUAL ABILITY
OF THE SOUTH KOREANS TO ASSUME A LARGER DEFENSE LOAD. TO
DO OTHERWISE COULD INVITE MILITARY ACTION BY NORTH KOREA,
WITH REMAINING AMERICAN FORCES INVOLVEMENT BEING MINUTES,
OR AT BEST HOURS, AWAY IN AN AREA WHERE ADVANCE INTELLI-
GENCE INFORMATION IS MOST INADEQUATE.

5. IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT THE KOREAN SCANDAL INVESTIGA-
TIONS IN THE CONGRESS HAVE OCCURRED AT THIS TIME, BUT THAT
COULD NOT HAVE BEEN FORESEEN WHEN WITHDRAWAL PLANS WERE
MADE. CONGRESSIONAL ATTEMPTS TO FORCE KOREAN COOPERATION
BY THREATS TO WITHHOLD THE PROPOSED MILITARY AID PACKAGE
OR DENY EXPORT-IMPORT BANK LOANS FOR ENERGY DEVELOPMENT
PROJECTS, ARE INDEED DEPLORABLE AND CAN ONLY WORK TO
THE LONG-TERM DETRIMENT OF OUR EAST ASIAN POLICY.

6. WHAT WILL BE INTERPRETED AS U.S. RENEGING ON THE
PROMISED MILITARY AID PACKAGE IS OF INTENSE INTEREST NOT
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ONLY TO KOREA, BUT ALSO TO OUR OTHER EAST ASIAN ALLIES
WHO TOO OFTEN PUT THEIR OWN ERRONEOUS INTERPRETATION ON OUR
KOREAN MOVES AS PART OF A LARGER GENERAL DISENGAGEMENT
OF AMERICAN INTEREST FROM EAST ASIA IN THE WAKE OF
VIET NAM.

7. IN A RECENT REPORT TO THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS
COMMITTEE TITLED "U.S.TROOP WITHDRAWAL FROM THE REPUBLIC
OF KOREA",MY PRINCIPLE RECOMMENDATION WAS:

"1. THE SENATE SHOULD REVIEW THE MILITARY TRANSFER
AUTHORIZATION BASED UPON THE POLITICAL-MILITARY NEEDS
OF THE AREA AND AVOID LINKING IT TO THE BRIBERY SCANDAL.
LONG-TERM U.S. POLITICAL ALIGNMENTS IN THE WHOLE EAST-
ASIAN REGION MUST NOT BE JEOPARDIZED FOR THE SHORT-TERM
OBJECTIVES OF THE SCANDAL INVESTIGATION."

BUT THAT IS OUR CURRENT SITUATION.

IN HIS SPEECH TO THE ASIA SOCIETY LAST JUNE, SECRETARY
VANCE NOTED THREE GOALS IN OUR KOREAN POLICY:

--THE RENEGOTIATION OF THE TRUCE AGREEMENT;

--DUAL ADMISSION OF THE TWO KOREAS INTO THE UNITED NATIONS;

AND

--NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO KOREAS.

8. OBVIOUSLY, SUCH STEPS TAKE TIME, AND LITTLE OR NO PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE ON THESE GOALS. THUS, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT A DEFERRAL OF THE WITHDRAWAL COULD BE USED AS MINIMAL LEVERAGE TO RETURN THE TWO KOREAS TO A NEGOTIATING TABLE. I FRANKLY DOUBT THAT ANYTHING MORE COULD BE EXPECTED IN THE PRESENT ENVIRONMENT.
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9. DEFERRAL OF THE WITHDRAWAL WOULD ALSO ALLOW TIME TO PURSUE THIS ISSUE WITH THE CHINESE. CLEARLY, THE PRC MAY BE THE KEY TO UNLOCKING A TRUCULENT NORTH KOREA. THUS, ANY IMPROVEMENTS IN SINO-AMERICAN BILATERAL RELATIONS MAY ENABLE US TO OBTAIN GREATER CHINESE ASSISTANCE WITH THE KOREAN PROBLEM.

10. IN CLOSING, LET ME REAFFIRM MY SUPPORT FOR THE BASIC POLICY. IT IS A JUSTIFIABLE POSITION OVER TIME, GIVEN OUR DESIRE TO MINIMIZE THE PROSPECTS OF INVOLVEMENT IN ANOTHER ASIAN WAR ON THE GROUND, GIVEN THE POTENTIAL POWER OF THE SOUTH WITH ITS ECONOMIC AND POPULATION ADVANTAGES OVER THE NORTH, AND THE NEED TO ENABLE THE ROK TO MILITARILY AND PSYCHOLOGICALLY STAND BY ITSELF.

11. BUT I FEEL WITHDRAWAL MUST BE TIED TO THE ACTUAL, IN-PLACE ABILITY OF THE SOUTH KOREANS TO TAKE OVER, AND NOT TO A TIME-TABLE SET PRIOR TO WHAT HAS DEVELOPED INTO A DIFFERENT AND UNFORESEEN SITUATION.

FOR THE REASONS INDICATED ABOVE, MY MAJOR CONCERN IS THAT 1978 IS NOT THE YEAR TO BEGIN THE DRAWDOWN.

BEST PERSONAL REGARDS. END TEXT

VANCE

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